



## Memorandum

**TO:** Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners

**FROM:** Greenberg Traurig

**DATE:** May 15, 2012

**RE:** April Report to the Board of County Commissioners

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Below please find a summary of Greenberg Traurig's efforts on behalf of Miami-Dade County in April.

### *Overview of Legislative Activity in April*

Congress was in recess for the majority of April in observance of Passover and Easter. Upon their return, Congress began the annual appropriations cycle in earnest. Committees received their spending levels, which were lower in the House than in the Senate. Members also began work on a miscellaneous tariff bill (MTB). The MTB is a bill that seeks to temporarily suspend tariffs on imported goods that are needed by American companies, but are not manufactured in the United States. The MTB is important to the County because in the past, the tariff suspensions were viewed as earmarks that violated the Congress-wide ban. This year the conservative freshman in the House are calling for Congress to pass the MTB. A total of 65 House Republican freshmen signed a letter to leadership calling for the allowance of duty suspension bills, despite the earmark ban. Many believe that this may be a prelude to the repeal of the earmark ban in Congress.

### *Agriculture*

In April, GT continued to monitor the progress of the 2012 farm bill. The Senate Agriculture Committee passed its draft version of the 2012 farm bill in April. The bill was almost derailed by southern farmers who were unhappy with the abolition of the direct payment system. Historically, these farmers relied on the promise of direct payments to serve as collateral for loans. The draft Senate bill provided expanded insurance coverage that southern farmers claimed was not useful to them. The markup of the Senate bill was delayed for 24 hours because of the push back by these farmers and their members in the Senate. In the end, Chairwoman Stabenow was able to modify the bill to include a "shallow loss" program that appeased the southern farmers. The House

has not provided a definitive timeline for markup of its version, but it will likely occur this summer.

### ***Aviation***

Our team closely tracked the progress of the transportation reauthorization bill in April. The Senate continued to refuse to pass a 90-extension of the surface transportation reauthorization bill. Instead, the Senate amended the House's extension with its own surface transportation bill. This sets the stage for a conference between the House and Senate. Florida's Senator Bill Nelson was named as a conferee. House Republican leadership said that the five-year, \$260 billion transportation proposal they were forced to abandon in March would serve as a goal post for Republicans in negotiations. However, it is likely that only a tiny portion of that bill — one overhauling environmental regulation and review requirements that were adopted as an amendment to the latest extension — will actually be negotiated at conference. GT will continue to closely monitor the progress of the surface transportation bill and report directly to the County.

### ***Media Updates***

GT continues to send media updates on legislative and political issues to the County in order to ensure that the Commission and staff remain up-to-date on developments within the Beltway. Our team has continued to send those interested individuals information regarding issues such as the reauthorization of the surface transportation bill, appropriations and immigration, among others. We will continue to monitor the issues most relevant to the County and provide timely and accurate information in order to make certain that the County is aware of any developments which may provide an opportunity to accomplish established legislative goals.

If you have any questions, or we can be of any further assistance, please let us know.